

111019 Do you know what one of our biggest problems we have in our relationship with God??? A poverty mentality when it comes to prayer!! **a poverty mentality has nothing to do with money...but with an attitude of meager expectations...**we often have too little expectations for our relationship with God??? were not expecting much...and that he hears us begrudgingly therefore gives reluctantly ...

Which means that one of the great short-term tragedies in the church is how little inclination we have to pray. The greatest invitation in the world is extended to us, and incomprehensibly we regularly turn away to other things. It's as though God sent us an invitation to the greatest banquet that ever was and we sent word back, *Luke 14:*¹⁸ *But they all began making excuses. One said, 'I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.'*¹⁹ *Another said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.'*²⁰ *Another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'*

But my prayer is that God would use this message and this word from Jesus in Matthew 7, and other influences in your life, to awaken a new compelling inclination to pray in 2007. I hope you will ask God to do that as we look at this text.

Matthew 7:7-12 (NLT) ⁷ *“Keep on asking, and you will receive **what you ask for**. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.* ⁸ **For everyone** who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. **And to everyone** who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹ *“You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? ¹⁰ Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! ¹¹ So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.*

Well, that was then. We will do it in two steps. First, we will look at eight encouragements to pray in Matthew 7:7-11. Second, we will try to answer the question of how we are to understand the promises that we will receive when we ask, and find when we seek, and have the door opened when we knock.

Seven Encouragements from Jesus to Pray....Six of these encouragements are explicit in this text and two are implicit. It seems clear to me that Jesus' main purpose in these verses is to encourage us and motivate us to pray. He wants us to pray. How does he encourage us?

1. He Invites Us to Pray

Three times he invites us to pray—or, you could say, three times he commands us to pray—to ask him for what we need. It's the number of times that he invites us that gets our attention.

Verses 7-8: ⁷ *“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.*

Jesus wants us to do this: 1. Ask your Father for what you need. 2. Seek your Father for the help you need. 3. Knock on the door of your Father's house so he will open and give you what you need.

- a. **Ask, seek, knock. I invite you three times because I really want you to enjoy your Father's help.**

2. He Makes Promises to Us if We Pray

Even better and more amazing than the three invitations are the seven promises.

Verses 7-8: *“Ask, and [#1] it will be given to you; seek, and [#2] you will find; knock, and [#3] it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks [#4] receives, and the one who seeks [#5] finds, and to the one who knocks [#6] it will be opened.”*
 Then at the end of verse 11b (#7): *“how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.*

The promises. The asker receives. The seeker finds. The knocker gets an open door. The result: Your Father will give you good things.

- Surely the point of this lavish array of promises is to say to us: Be encouraged to come. Pray to him.

- **It is not in vain that you pray. God is not toying with you. He answers. He gives good things when you pray. Be encouraged. Pray often, pray regularly, pray confidently**

3. Jesus encourages us not only by the number of invitations and promises, but by the threefold variety of invitations. In other words, God stands ready to respond positively when you find him at different levels of accessibility.

- **Ask.** ...If a child's father is present, he asks him for what he needs.
- **Seek.**...If a child's father is somewhere in the house but not seen, he seeks his father for what he needs.
- **Knock.**... If the child seeks and finds the father behind the closed door of his study, he knocks to get what he needs.
- **The point seems to be that it doesn't matter whether you find God immediately close at hand, almost touchable with his nearness, or hard to see and even with barriers between, he will hear, and he will give good things to you because you looked to him and not another.**

4. Everyone Who Asks Receives if they are in a father and child relationship, he is talking about the children of God here, not all human beings.

- If we will not have Jesus as our Savior and God as our Father, then these promises don't apply to us.

John 1:12 says, ¹² But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

- To become the child of God, we must receive the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who gives us the authority of adoption.
- That is who these promises are for. For those who receive Jesus, everyone of them who asks receives good things from his Father. The point is that none of his children is excluded. All are welcome and urged to come. Martin Luther saw the way Jesus is motivating here:

- He knows that we are timid and shy, that we can feel unworthy and unfit to present our needs to God. . . . We think that God is so great and we are so tiny that we do not dare to pray. . . .
- That is why Christ wants to lure us away from such apprehensive thoughts, to remove our doubts, and to have us go ahead confidently and boldly.”

5. Our Heavenly Father Is Better than Our Earthly Father.

Verse 11: ! ¹¹ *So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.*

- **Father was not a throw away label for Jesus. It is one of the greatest of all truths. God is our Father.**
- The implications is that he will never, never give us what is ultimately destructive to us. Never. He is our Father.
- Then the Jesus encourages us to pray by showing us that our heavenly Father is better than our earthly father and will far more certainly give good things to us than they did.
- There is no sinfulness in our heavenly Father like there is in our earthly father.
- I am aware, and Jesus was even more aware, that our earthly fathers are sinful.

This is why the Bible repeatedly draws attention not only to the similarity between earthly fathers and the heavenly Father, but also to the differences

Hebrews 12:9-11⁹ Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? ¹⁰ For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way..

- So Jesus goes beyond the encouragement of saying that God is your Father, and **says that God is always better than your earthly father, because all earthly fathers sin and God does not.**

- *Don't ever limit your understanding of the Fatherhood of God to your experience of your own father. Rather, take heart that God has none of the sins or limitations or weaknesses or hang-ups of your father.*
- And the point Jesus makes is: Even fallen, sinful fathers usually have a desire to give some good things to their children.
- There are terribly abusive fathers. But a majority of fathers are desiring to do good for their children, even when they are unclear about what is good for them.
- But God is always better. In him there is no sin. Therefore, the argument is strong: If your earthly father gave you good things (or even if he didn't!), how much more will your heavenly Father give good things—always good things to those who ask.
- **And there is something beautiful here that underlines encouragement #4 above—the word everyone—“Everyone who asks receives.”**
- **If Jesus says to his disciples, “You are sinful,” then the only people that can come to God in prayer are sinful children of God.**
- **You are children of God. And you are sinful. In other words, even after you are adopted by God into his family, sin remains in you. But Jesus says, everyone will receive—everyone of God's evil children! We will see why in a moment.**

6. We Can Trust God's Goodness Because He Has Already Made Us His Children

- **Here is another implicit encouragement to pray: God will give us good things as his children because he has already given us the gift to become his children.**

This insight came from St. Augustine: “For what would he not now give to sons when they ask, when he has already granted this very thing, namely, that they might be sons?” We have already seen that being a son of God is a gift we receive when we come to Jesus (John 1:12). So if God has freely made us sons, how much more will he give us what we need?

7. The Cross Is the Foundation of Prayer

Finally, implicit in these words is the cross of Christ as the foundation for all the answers to our prayer. The reason I say this is because he calls us evil and yet he says we are children of God. How can it be that evil people are adopted by an all holy God?

The death of Jesus is the foundation for all the promises of God and all the answers to prayer that we ever get. we have been bought...and given new life...new relationship... The Resurrection makes it official...we are born again into the family of God!.

This is why we say “in Jesus’ name” at the end of our prayers. Everything depends on him.

One Question: How shall we understand these six promises in verses 7 and 8: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened”?

Does this mean that everything a child of God asks for he gets?

No, we do not get everything we ask for and we should not and we would not want to. But the reason I say that we do not get all we ask is because the text implies this.

Jesus says in verses ⁹ “You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? ¹⁰ Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not!

This illustration prompts us to ask, “What if what the child thinks they are asking for is not really what they are asking for....

asking for a loaf of bread...but the father see a stone...asking for what they think is fish...but is really a serpent... if human parents can distinguish between good and bad with their limited knowledge and power...how much more will your Father give good things to those who ask him, as he has infinite wisdom and power and knowledge....

so He Gives Only Good Things

He gives good things. Only good things. He does not give serpents to children. Therefore, the text itself points away from the conclusion that Ask and you will receive means Ask and you will receive the very thing you ask for when you ask for it in the way you ask for it. It doesn't say that. And it doesn't mean that.

If we take the passage as a whole, it says that when we ask and seek and knock—when we pray as needy children looking away from our own resources to our trustworthy heavenly Father—he will hear and he will give us good things. Sometimes just what we asked. Sometimes just when we ask it. Sometimes just the way we desire. And other times he gives us something better, or at a time he knows is better, or in a way he knows is better.

And of course, this tests our faith. Because if we thought that something different were better, we would have asked for it in the first place. But we are not God. We are not infinitely strong, or infinitely righteous, or infinitely good, or infinitely wise, or infinitely loving. And therefore, it is a great mercy to us and to the world that we do not get all we ask.

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Pray -> (World Book) -> To speak to God in worship; enter into spiritual communion with God; to pray for help; to ask God. An act of worship to express praise to God.

Praying is simply talking to God. God wants us to talk to Him continually as stated in Ephesians 6:18, "*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.*" No matter what day, time or place, God's ears are always open to hear you talk to Him.